

of your triumphs. And so today we send you off with congratulations on the success you have already achieved and on the accomplishments we know will be yours in Beijing.

May you and your teammates compete “swifter, higher, and stronger” in the

games. And may God bless you as you represent our wonderful Nation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:05 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Fatmir Sejdiu and Prime Minister Hashim Thaci of Kosovo July 21, 2008

President Bush. It has been an honor to welcome the President and Prime Minister of an independent Kosovo to the Oval Office. I’m proud you all are here. I welcome you. I’m a strong supporter of Kosovo’s independence; I’m against any partition of Kosovo. I believe strongly that the United Nations mission must be transferred to the EU as quickly as possible. I want to thank you very much for your support of minority rights, the full implementation of the Ahtisaari plan.

We discussed a variety of issues. We discussed the problems that Kosovo faces, its desire to be recognized by more nations around the world. I pledged that the United States would continue to work with those nations that have not recognized an independent Kosovo to convince them to do so as quickly as possible.

We talked about economics, education. And we talked about the transatlantic aspirations of both Kosovo and Serbia, which the United States supports in both cases.

I mentioned to both these leaders that they were sitting right below the portrait of George Washington, the Founder of a free United States. And I appreciate your courage; I appreciate your leadership. And I commit the United States to help you realize your dreams. Welcome.

President Sejdiu. It’s an extraordinary occasion for us to be received by President Bush to convey to him all the aspirations

and all the thanks of the Kosovo people—heartfelt thanks.

The Kosovo people have been following democracy—the principles of democracy and freedom. And the United States are—they are supporters. We guarantee the—President Bush that we will continue on this road, and at the same time to implement the Ahtisaari document.

Kosovo will be a country of democracy, a country of all its citizens. It will have a special respect for the minorities. We are very much interested to have good relations with the Republic of Serbia. Our progress will be with integration of NATO and EU.

Again, my heartfelt thanks, and God bless America.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Thaci. The meeting—today’s meeting with President Bush not only reiterates the fact that we are closely connected with the United States, but will always be their trustful friend—

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

Prime Minister Thaci. —forever.

We have always trusted the United States and trusted the development of our country and that it will be to the benefit of the international development.

The Kosovo Government and the Kosovo people will always bow in deep respect for the United States and for the U.S. administration. It is a joint success story. We are

building a democratic Kosovo, affirmative action for the minorities. We'll develop economic—Kosovo economically. We'll have excellent relations with all our neighbors, and in the future, with Serbia.

As a sovereign and democratic country, we want to be part of NATO and part of the EU and have excellent relations with the United States. This is our pledge; this is our responsibility; this is our vision.

And thank you very much again.

President Bush. Yes, sir. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:57 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Sejdiu and Prime Minister Thaci spoke in Albanian, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at a Dinner Honoring Current and Former United States Olympic Athletes July 21, 2008

Ladies and gentlemen, Laura and I are thrilled to have you here. Welcome to the East Room of the White House. Chairman Ueberroth; Mr. Secretary—the—Veterans Affairs Secretary Peake; Members of the Congress; members of the 2008 United States Olympic and Paralympic teams; Mayor of Chicago, who will be hosting the 2016 Olympics; Ambassadors; supporters of the Olympics; distinguished guests: We're really glad you're here.

I also do want to recognize Seldom Scene. They're the bluegrass band that will be playing after dinner in the Rose Garden.

In a few weeks, the athletes here and others will participate in one of the greatest traditions in the world of sports. You're going to travel halfway around the globe, you'll step onto the field of competition, and you will represent the United States of America at the 2008 Olympics. And we're really excited. And not only we're excited, but people who have worn the USA uniform before are excited with you. And we welcome all the previous Olympians who are with us today, and I want to thank you for coming.

And you're not going to be alone in Beijing because you're going to be accompanied by the hopes and pride of millions of Americans. There's going to be a lot

of folks in Beijing to watch you, including Laura and me. And I cannot wait to cheer you on. All the room have devoted years to training and preparation. You've developed the self-discipline that defines a champion. And you've proven yourself worthy of representing the Nation.

The tradition you're carrying on is long and it is noble. It turns out, when the first American Olympians traveled to the 1896 Games in Athens, Grover Cleveland lived here in the House. The Oval Office had yet to be built. In those 112 years that have passed, we have been reminded time and again that the Olympics are not just a chance to celebrate our greatest athletes, they're an opportunity to demonstrate the strength of the human spirit.

We were reminded of this truth in 1936, when Jesse Owens won four Gold Medals at the Berlin Olympics. We're reminded of the truth in 1972, when 80,000 spectators filled Munich's Olympic Stadium to honor 11 Israeli athletes and coaches killed by a cowardly act of terrorism. And we were reminded of this truth in 2002, when a tattered American flag recovered from the ruins of the World Trade Center entered the Olympic Stadium in Salt Lake City and displayed to the world the resolve and resilience of our country.